

# National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board

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## DRAFT MINUTES Executive Committee Conference Call

**Thursday, September 18, 2008, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST.**

**Executive Committee Members Present:** Dr. Martin Massengale, Chair; Dr. Martin Apple; Mrs. Marianne Smith-Edge; Mrs. Carol Keiser-Long; Dr. Edward Runge; Dr. Joe Dunn, Deputy Undersecretary for REE; Dr. Gale Buchanan, REE Undersecretary.

**Executive Committee Members Absent:** Dr. Walt Armbruster, Dr. David Thomassen, Dr. Daryl Lund, Dr. Mary Wagner

**NAREEE Board Staff:** Mrs. Karen Hunter, Executive Director, Mrs. Shirley Morgan Jordan Program Support Coordinator



### **I. Roll Call of Members and Invitees**

Karen Hunter, Executive Director called roll of the Executive Committee members.

### **II. Comments and Welcome**

Martin Massengale welcomed everyone on the conference call. He indicated that the work groups were in place for the November Board meeting. The initial members of the Renewable Energy Committee have been appointed. It is likely that several more members will be added after the new Board members are appointed. He noted that Ed Runge would be providing the Specialty Crops report in Dr. Armbruster's absence. Dr. Massengale, Carol Keiser-Long, and Karen Hunter attended the Biomass Research and Development Board's (BRDI) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting the previous week. He reported that the group made some good contacts and anticipated collaboration on future activities. The TAC spent time focusing on research and development. A background paper was referenced and copies were obtained for the NAREEE Renewable Energy Committee members. Dr. Massengale indicated that Carol would provide additional comments on the meeting during the Renewable Energy Committee report later on the agenda. He additionally noted that he had received information on a cellulosic

energy meeting in Florida in late November and that he would share the details with Carol and Karen at a later date.

### **III. Comments from Dr. Buchanan**

Dr. Buchanan also provided some comments. The pace of activities in the REE area has increased in the past several weeks. The Farm Bill Implementation Committee is close to identifying the Division Chiefs for the new Research Education and Economics Office (REEO). He stated that he will be personally interviewing the final candidates sometime next week. The Division Chiefs will be named by the end of the month. All candidates are from within the REE agencies. Dr. Buchanan also noted that the roadmap effort was initiated by September 16, thus meeting the deadline established in the Farm Bill (90 days post-enactment of the Bill). As soon as the division chiefs are named, one of their first charges will be to continue to develop and refine the roadmap. Dr. Buchanan stated that the REE area has obeyed the recommendation to the Department and has the Farm Bill Implementation Committee working to further develop the new National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Proposed plans are currently being considered by the Farm Bill Committee based out of the Secretary's office. REE is ready to respond to any comments emerging from that consideration.

Dr. Buchanan further stated that the REE office is in the process of developing the role for the Chief Scientist in the Department. He has developed a white paper on suggested roles and responsibilities. The Farm Bill indicates that the future Undersecretary for REE will be the Chief Scientist for USDA. Dr. Massengale asked if the role of USDA Chief Scientist will have similar responsibilities and influence as the Chief Economist. Dr. Buchanan expressed his hope that the position indeed has more responsibility in advising the Secretary on scientific matters not only in REE, but also in NRCS, FNS, and any other program within USDA involving science.

Dr. Buchanan indicated that he is close to identifying NAREEE Advisory Board nominees to forward to the Secretary. He also commented that Dr. Dunn assumed the position of Deputy Undersecretary for REE, replacing Dr. Merle Pierson. Dr. Massengale offered congratulations to Dr. Dunn on behalf of the Board. Dr. Buchanan clarified that the Director of NIFA will be Presidentially-appointed, non-Senate-confirmed, as opposed to the Undersecretary who is Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed.

Joe Dunn made a few comments. He informed the Board that the REE Energy Summit will take place September 29-30 in Washington DC. Dr. Massengale will be in attendance and will participate in a panel discussion on September 30. As of today, 148 out of 150 seats have been filled, suggesting that there should be a good turnout. Dr. Massengale suggested that Carol Keiser-Long consider attending as chair of the NAREEE Renewable Energy Committee. Dr. Buchanan expressed his agreement with Dr. Massengale and encouraged Carol to attend if her schedule permitted.

### **IV. Update on Committee Activities**

### **Specialty Crop Committee Activities**

Ed Runge reported on behalf of Walt Armbruster. He attended the sessions in Washington and New York States. Although the groups at the sessions were small, they represented a wide variety of specialty crop stakeholders. The matching funds for the CSREES Specialty Crop Research Initiative were a concern raised by many attendees. Ed noted that water was an issue particularly at the Ellensburg, WA listening session, but was not as much of a concern for Mount Vernon, WA producers. In Canandaigua, NY, producers were most concerned about fruit trees and grapes. Pesticide drift—particularly spraying techniques and reduction of drift – was a major discussion topic. Dr. Massengale also mentioned that people at the meeting wanted the Specialty Crops Committee to realize the importance of the IR-4 project in NY and the Northeast. A common theme among all listening sessions was energy cost increases and the effect it was having on the specialty crop economy, especially transit costs and profit/loss margins. The 2009 Specialty Crop listening session will likely be held in Florida during March or April.

### **Protocol Committee Activities**

Karen Hunter stated that John Cunningham was unable to report on the Protocol Committee's recent activities. Dr. Cunningham emailed a brief update earlier in the week, stating that the Committee had not met since March 2008 when it invited Bob MacDonald (CSREES) to speak. Dr. Cunningham questioned if perhaps the Committee had completed its charge and should be disbanded. Dr. Massengale indicated that he would try and follow up with Adela Ramos or someone else on the Hill and determine the proper interpretation of the legislation.

### **Peer Review Committee Activities**

Ed Runge presented comments on behalf of the Peer Review Committee. He noted that several upcoming peer reviews at ARS had been postponed until the end of the year. Dr. Apple sat in personally on an agronomic crops peer review in August and made favorable comments during the sessions. Dr. Apple additionally offered suggestions to the participating ARS administrators for improvement. ARS is instituting online reviews in some instances. So far the process has proven to be efficient and effective, especially when space is lacking. The reviewers were pleased to not have to travel to Beltsville for the review. The reviewers were geographically diverse. Ed asked if the Peer Review Committee needed to travel to attend the reviews face-to-face or if participating in the online review process was sufficient.

Dr. Massengale suggested perhaps attending at least one review in person to gain a better sense of the process, and then attend online reviews when possible. A couple reviewers expressed some concern regarding how to rate 1-person projects versus 5-person projects. Ed asked Dr. Buchanan how research proposals are shared across agencies before and after completion. Dr. Buchanan replied that there currently was not a good method of information sharing, but that one of the key components of the new REEO offices was a better communication division, which

should facilitate some of the communication. ARS currently relies on local laboratories to share results and proposal information, or to utilize the Cooperative Extension service, but acknowledged that not all of the projects are shared in this manner. Dr. Massengale suggested that perhaps the Peer Review Committee include in their spring report a strong recommendation for the Department to try and increase the sharing of results. Dr. Buchanan re-emphasized the organizational structure of the REEO offices and how they could help share results.

### **Renewable Energy Committee Activities**

Carol Keiser-Long reported that she attended the recent Biomass Research and Development Initiative (BRDI) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting with Dr. Massengale and Karen Hunter. She said the meeting was a valuable experience in determining what the NAREEE Renewable Energy committee should be working on. She plans to attend the December meeting of the TAC and will provide an update regarding NAREEE Renewable Energy committee activities. The Committee had its first conference call earlier in the week. Out of 9 members, 6 participated on the call. The call agenda included sharing of background information from each member, which clearly showed a diverse yet focused group of individuals. A few gaps in expertise were identified (plant physiology/genomics, solar/wind power). David Thomassen is a good choice for a vice chair and brings experience with the Department of Energy in basic research. Fred Vogel should prove to be a valuable asset as well, with a strong statistics background and global perspective on energy. Paul Bloom, who works for Archer Daniels Midland Company has expertise in industrial chemicals and bioproducts. Jim Clark and Joe Layton are current Board members also serving on the Renewable Energy Committee. Bill Horan from Iowa runs 3 biodiesel plants and has interest in wind/solar power. The Committee talked about the legislation, ideas for the future, and building on what has already been done. The consensus was that resources must be used efficiently and effectively. Genomics in crops and biomass conversion technologies also warrant future investigation. It will be important to include the impacts of renewable energy on the environment and on economics. New versus existing infrastructure was discussed. The Committee is planning their next conference call for mid-October. Karen will be sending TAC materials and the REE Strategic Energy Plan to Committee members before the end of the week. The goal of the next call is to decide how to build a framework based on the Committee's charge. After several teleconferences, Carol indicated that the Committee plans to meet face-to-face. Overall, the Committee is on target to complete the first mandated report (due 180 days post-appointment).

Dr. Massengale commented that the BRDI TAC has historically been chaired by two former Congressmen (currently from MN and LA). Carol also pointed out that the TAC spent considerable time refining and clarifying their recommendations to the full BRDI Board.

### **Educating the Future Work Force for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Areas Report**

Marianne reported that a draft of the Workforce Development report had been sent to the Executive Committee with a September 23 deadline for comments. She indicated that Carol Keiser-Long had responded with several comments already. Upon receipt of any additional

comments, the draft will be sent for full Board approval and then forwarded to the Secretary and to Congress.

## **V. Board Nominations**

Karen Hunter reported that the vetting of the nominees was in progress and expected to be complete within a week. She has a meeting scheduled with Dr. Buchanan to review the final nominees before preparing the selection memo for the Secretary.

## **VI. Planning for the Fall Meeting**

Karen Hunter confirmed meeting dates of November 12-14, 2008. The draft agenda should be completed in the near future. Fred Cholick is available to speak on Thursday afternoon. Adela Ramos is available to speak during the meeting. Dr. Massengale stated that the Board should try to have recommendations drafted prior to the end of the meeting, to facilitate more efficient and timely reporting to the Secretary and to Congress.

## **VII. Spring Dates for Committee and Board Activities**

Shirley Morgan-Jordan reported that she is checking into dates for the spring full Board meeting. Congress will not be in session the week before and the week after Easter. She is checking hotel availability for the week of April 27 and the week of May 4. The hotels appear to be less busy then, but still filling up quickly. The Lowes Hotel at L'Enfant Plaza is available from May 6-8. The Doubletree Hotel is available April 28-30. Several of the hotels Shirley contacted were already fully booked for those weeks. Dr. Buchanan asked about checking into hotels in Ballston, VA, near the National Science Foundation. He stressed the importance of being cost-effective. Shirley indicated that the Board generally tended to meet in downtown DC. However, if the Board met in Virginia, members could take the metro and get into the city or wherever else they wanted to go fairly easily. Dr. Massengale stated that in the past, it seemed difficult to get Hill staff to the meetings if the location was not convenient. He further stated that it might be time to start looking at dates for the October full Board meeting, to secure a location preferred dates. Shirley stated that she had received information about hotels near the new Harbor near Anacostia. Ed Runge mentioned that he had stayed at the Ballston Courtyard Marriot and had no complaints. Dr. Massengale suggested a teleconference with Shirley and Karen next week to try and identify some alternate locations and dates for the fall meeting.

## **VIII. Other**

Dr. Massengale pointed out that the new division directors appointments' for the Research Education and Extension Office (REEO) will be finalized by the October teleconference. He also informed the Executive Committee that he had spoken with Dr. Shafer's secretary to try and coordinate a time for the Secretary to speak at the November meeting.

*The next Executive Committee Conference Call will be October 16, 2008 at 11:00 a.m., Eastern Standard Time.*

The meeting adjourned at 12:10p.m.

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MARTIN MASSENGALE  
Chair

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Karen Hunter  
Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD: \_\_\_\_\_

Date

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Initials  
Chair

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Executive Director